



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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SURVEY SHOWS LITTLE CHANGE IN CENTRAL FLYWAY WATERFOWL NUMBERS

The mid-winter survey showed no significant change in the number of waterfowl in the Central Flyway from a year ago, the Department of the Interior announced today.

The survey summary, prepared by Regional Director John C. Gatlin of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico, revealed the duck count up slightly, Canada geese relatively unchanged in numbers, the white-fronted geese and the blue geese down 40 percent and 18 percent respectively, and the coot population up 45 percent.

A closed season on canvasback and redhead ducks on a nationwide basis was necessary the past fall because drought conditions had seriously reduced the nesting success of these two popular species and brought their numbers to seriously low levels. The closure was ordered in an effort to return as many breeding canvasback and redhead ducks as possible to the nesting grounds this year so as to speed the recovery of this important segment of the waterfowl population.

Winter survey counts showed the Central Flyway redhead duck population had increased significantly over a year ago although canvasbacks still were declining in numbers. The latter species is not an important one in the Central Flyway in contrast to the redhead ducks which are widely sought by hunters and are found in large numbers in certain areas where population levels are favorable.

Five States--Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and New Mexico--and the east coast and interior sections of the Republic of Mexico reported increases in wintering waterfowl populations; however, only the South Dakota and east coast of Mexico increases were important. The remaining States of the flyway--Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas--reported decreases ranging from about seven percent to 35 percent.

A total of 337 State and Federal observers participated in the annual survey of wintering waterfowl. Thirty-five aircraft were flown about 21,600 miles to survey the populations of ducks, geese, and coots that winter in the States of the flyway. In addition, about 28,000 miles were traveled by boat, car, and other forms of land transportation to enumerate the waterfowl population. Biologists of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife conducted the survey along the east coast and the interior of Mexico.

The survey is conducted each year to obtain a count of flyway populations of waterfowl remaining after the close of the hunting season. Results of the survey, along with information from breeding ground surveys, estimates of waterfowl kill, and analyses of banding data, are used by the bureau and the States in formulating the annual waterfowl hunting regulations.

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